



LEWIS & CLARK CITY-COUNTY Health Department

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Flu Season Gathering Steam; Protective Shots Still Available

Lewis and Clark County may be part of a national trend toward an early flu season, with five new cases since the beginning of December, according to local public health officials.

That brings the total number to six cases identified in the county since the reporting season began in September. The first case was reported in October; during the last flu season, the first case was in January.

Statewide, 31 cases of flu have been confirmed and 5 people have been hospitalized. Nationwide, 18 states are reporting widespread influenza.

“This is a reminder for anyone who hasn’t gotten a flu shot yet,” said Karen Dobson, public health nurse supervisor at the Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department. “If you’ve been putting it off, it’s not too late to get vaccinated. There’s still plenty of vaccine available.”

As people begin traveling and congregating for the holidays, the opportunities to spread the highly contagious flu virus increase, she added. It takes up to two weeks for the vaccine to take full effect, so the sooner a person is vaccinated the better.

“A flu shot is good protection against influenza,” Dobson said, “and this year’s vaccine seems to be a good match for the flu strains that are circulating.”

Other preventive measures that people can take include:

- Washing your hands well and often.
- Avoiding close contact with sick people.
- Covering your mouth and nose with a tissue or elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

If you do get sick, stay home and limit your contact with other people as much as possible to keep from spreading your illness to others, Dobson advised.

*The mission of the Lewis & Clark City-County Health Department is to
improve and protect the health of all county residents.*

The health department offers immunizations on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., 1930 Ninth Avenue. No appointment is needed. For more information, call the health department's flu hotline at 457-8904 or visit www.lewisandclarkhealth.org.

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